Shorter Contributions

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EARLY NEST RECORD FOR WORM-EATING WARBLER (*HELMITHEROS VERMIVORUM*) IN VIRGINIA. — On 7 May 2011 the ground nest of a Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) was discovered in Leesylvania State Park, Prince William County, Virginia, after one of the authors (KCRK) inadvertently flushed an adult from the nest. The bird called in alarm from a nearby ground perch but did not engage in an open wing display. The nest was in typical microhabitat for this species (Bent, 1953): on a wooded slope descending to a creek. The forest floor was layered thickly with oak leaves (*Quercus* spp.). Ground cover was relatively sparse but a patch of Blue Ridge Blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*) mostly concealed the nest (Fig. 1A).

The nest contained six eggs of Worm-eating Warbler, plus a single egg from Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) (Fig. 1B). While the clutch size is within the normal range for this species (4-6 eggs), it has been observed that final clutch size is generally smaller in parasitized nests (Hanners & Patton, 1998). Nest parasitism rates of Worm-eating Warbler evidently vary by region (Hanners & Patton, 1998; Dececco et al., 2000; Gram et al., 2003;), but the rate has been known to decrease with nesting date (S. Robinson, pers. comm. *in* Hanners & Patton, 1998).

Our observation represents an early nesting record for this species in Virginia. Like most passerines, the Worm-eating Warbler lays only a single egg per day (Hanners & Patton, 1998; McMaster et al., 1999), and was likely already incubating on the date of discovery, so the first egg must have been laid at least as early as 2 May 2011. The previous early record for the state

Fig. 1. (A) Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) sitting on a ground nest hidden by a patch of Blue Ridge Blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*). (B) Six eggs of the host species were present plus one egg from a Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*); an arrow indicates the latter.

was 11 May based on a Chalk Mountain nest containing three eggs found on 13 May 1967 (Clapp, 1997). Early egg dates for Maryland and Pennsylvania are 29 May and 15 May, respectively (Robbins & Blom, 1996). Mean temperatures in Virginia for both April and May of 2011 were above normal (National Climate Data Center, http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/research/cag3/cag3.html). The effect of environmental temperature (versus genotype) on lay date remains unclear (Brommer et al., 2008), but there is evidence from other avian species that nesting dates are averaging earlier in parallel with the changing climate (see Crick, 2004, and references therein).

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WHAT KIND OF FLEAS DOES YOUR DOG HAVE? — Only a few of the approximately 2500 known species of fleas worldwide have common names. These are usually common flea species that are parasites on humans and domestic animals. The dog flea, *Ctenocephalides canis* (Curtis, 1826), and the cat flea, *Ctenocephalides felis* (Bouché, 1835), are among these. By their names, one would expect dogs to have the dog flea and cats the cat flea. What do we actually find in Virginia? I have examined the fleas taken from 29 dogs from Virginia. In total, 244 fleas were identified and all were cat fleas! The cat fleas from dogs were obtained from the following counties in Virginia (those marked with an asterisk are new county records): Accomack*, Albemarle*, Arlington, Augusta*, Chesterfield*, Fairfax*, Fauquier*, Henrico, James City*, Loudoun*, Louisa*, Prince William*, York*, and Portsmouth City*. In the surrounding jurisdictions of West Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia two dogs from each were examined and 321 additional fleas